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DHS Presents Families First Employers of the Year

NASHVILLE – The Tennessee Department of Human Services (DHS) recognized two Tennessee employers for their outstanding support of the Families First welfare reform program. Both companies have helped participants make successful transitions into the workplace.

The two state Employer of the Year recipients are Contact Concepts of Clarksville and Baptist Hospital of East Tennessee in Knoxville.

“Tennessee has been recognized as one of the nation’s most successful welfare reform programs, and a major reason for this success is the tremendous support we receive from employers across the state,” said DHS Commissioner Natasha K. Metcalf. “Since the planning stages of Families First, it was clearly understood that employers would be integral partners in the success of the program. Many businesses have come forward to help us develop job-specific training programs for Families First participants. We recognize that the best way to make sure that welfare recipients obtain jobs and become effective and valuable employees is to work closely with employers.”

Contact Concepts, the Large Employer of the Year, is a telemarketing company that has been very aggressive in employing Families First participants. The company sells various products for its clients, including MCI and Dish Network, along with other marketing materials. Contact Concepts hired 64 Families First participants between July 2000 to June 2001. Starting wages are \$8.00 an hour, but the average wage is closer to \$10.00 an hour.

Baptist Hospital, the Small Employer of the Year, has won numerous awards, including The Governor’s Award for Excellence, Top 100 Hospitals and Benchmark for Success. The hospital has recruited and offered work opportunities to eight Families First customers, and has worked with the Department’s Employment Career Specialists to help customers improve their skills and keep their positions. The average hourly wage for these employees is \$8.17.

Individual companies are nominated by local Families First Advisory Councils around the state. Large and Small Employers of the year are named in each of the eight DHS districts. The Governor’s Office, in cooperation with the DHS state office, award the statewide winners for their outstanding commitment to the Families First program.

Families First is the state’s welfare reform program that emphasizes work, job training and education for able-bodied adults receiving public assistance. The program began on September 1, 1996.

